

FAX 916 557-5138

August 7, 2000

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Sacramento District Planning Division
1325 J Street, Sacramento, Ca. 95814-2922

Attention: Nina Bicknese

RE: Draft General Re-Evaluation Report/Environmental Impact Report and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (draft report) for Proposed Modifications to the Guadalupe River Project, Downtown San Jose, California (project).

Dear Nina and long-term preparers,

The public hearing of July 26 was a positive testimony to the efforts that have been made by all parties to protect and preserve the Guadalupe River for posterity, and to provide protection from flood for the residents and businesses of San Jose.

It is an exceptional challenge to retain the beneficial instream uses of the river for salmon and steelhead and for the water supply regimen that the Santa Clara Valley Water District must use to replenish the Valley's aquifers, especially in extended seasons of drought, while buffering downtown San Jose against ten, twenty-five and one hundred year floods. There are still aspects of this delicate balance that need some adjustment however, if you will bear with my concerns.

The base flow conditions are not presented in the data as precisely as needed for both scientific and non-scientific evaluation, I feel. The temperature data does not agree with the monitoring reports of the last twenty years that I access from USGS data. The importance of Los Gatos Creek as to both base flow and temperature is not sufficiently evaluated and needs assurance of continuity in a management plan. Los Gatos Creek and its watershed, from a biological resource reference point as well as the dynamics of its flood flows, needs to be included in this EIR.

LUCAS-1
LUCAS-2
LUCAS-3
LUCAS-4

The original Guadalupe River scoping document outlined a project that could retain two thirds of the natural river streambanks and riparian canopy. Downtown development and freeways reduced this to a third. It is this third, one mile of a three mile natural river system in an urban surroundings environment, that was deemed essential for the integrity of the system, if it was to be preserved. What is not evident in this plan is that assurance of a viable third of the habitat being truly available for refugia for the wildlife over the length of the project. A timeline is needed for what stretch of streambanks will be usable for fish or waterfowl, red-legged frogs or pond turtles for the next ten years, as all three Guadalupe River flood control projects dovetail into each other. Doesn't CEQA have express concerns over piecemealing that relates to cumulative effects that could permanently remove a resource from a river or watershed? Isn't this a prime example of such projects?

LUCAS-5
LUCAS-6

There are alternative engineering considerations that should be incorporated into this EIR for maximum cost and environmental effectiveness that I would appreciate discussion on if not inclusion in the 'mitigation' implementation. Thermal and mercury pollution might be minimized? Armoring could include percolation potential? If old bridges are not an impediment to flood flows why not retain them for all aspects of alternative and pedestrian traffic and to keep their historic presence? The USGS gage at St. John Street needs to be preserved to provide historic continuity to Guadalupe River flows and water quality monitoring. It is the base line!

LUCAS-7
LUCAS-8
LUCAS-9

St. John Street and Old Julian were to be preserved and think they are necessary bridges for pedestrian and bike circulation. Has this loss had any public hearing? Should this be submitted to the San Jose planning review as a separate item?

LUCAS-10

In Chapter 4.1 Hydrologic and Hydraulic Conditions, Table 4.1-3 shows the monthly distribution of Mean Daily Flows in the Guadalupe River at the USGS gage just below the confluence with Los Gatos Creek, with the table computed as the 'percent of mean daily flows less than the indicated amount', from 1954 through 1998.

This is a misleading frame of reference and presented in the most confusing possible mathematical statistical analysis. As mean is the average, one does not readily see the spikes and lows of base flow that determine the survival capability of resident or anadromous fish. My references show 1938-39 to be an entire no flow year. After the reservoirs went in, and in years of light precipitation, half the months were at zero flow. If one calculated the days of no flow that would be an entirely different ratio. Does this data include the 1983-91 IBM/Fairchild cleanup flows to Canoas? If so, this would skew 'mean' data, would it not?

LUCAS-11

It should also be noted that the cannery activities on the Guadalupe River contributed flows of a sort, if I'm not mistaken. This would not show up on the St. John Street USGS gage but it would supplement flows below this point. In the fall of 1986, 262 potential redds of chinook salmon were noted on the Guadalupe River by California Fish & Game staff, with the greatest numbers downstream of Highway 280, especially in the Taylor Street Bridge reach. It would translate into thousands of fry.

LUCAS-12

LUCAS-13

With such a variety of contributing flows it is hard to establish what base flow is essential for the continued survival of the Guadalupe River salmon but it must be addressed in this environmental document. Historically and presently this is a salmon stream and this instream beneficial use needs to be guaranteed.

LUCAS-14

The short river salmon that have developed unique survival skills since the last ice age, are said to be induced by attraction flows, but also seem to have the instinct to come into San Francisco Bay and to the South Bay rivers as early as mid-August in certain years and quite regularly by mid-September. Sharks have a part of their anatomy that functions as a barometer and salmon may well have a similar built-in reading of an approaching early or late rain or wet year. As their cycle for anadromous survival runs seven years, it is imperative that at least two or three of those years, in concert with favorable weather conditions, be left for them to spawn in sustainable habitat in the Guadalupe. Does this project allow a window of opportunity for accomodating the critical needs of these salmon?

LUCAS-15

LUCAS-16

It would be preferable if construction activities in the river were halted when salmon were reported moving up the system. I believe the bridge construction at the airport was conditioned in this way. By the same criteria, if it is a late arrival of the salmon, the November 1 Lexington Reservoir curtailment of flows and the diversions downstream, as at the percolation ponds and Page Ditch and Kirk Dam should be more leniently managed. This fine tuning of some manner of a salmon survival management plan needs to be addressed in this EIR. This 4.1.1.4 section on minimum flow releases is inadequate in this regard.

LUCAS-17

LUCAS-18

Los Gatos Creek water supply and flow management is more critical to the salmon survival in the Guadalupe River system and should be continued until an equivalent habitat refugia and water regimen can be realized in Guadalupe Creek. But it cannot be understood what these flows have consisted of in the Table 4.1-3 mean assessment, so there is a critical data gap that needs to be ammended here.

LUCAS-19

LUCAS-20

Percolation from upstream sources bubble up into the river bed of the Guadalupe in this downtown reach of the river and some quantification of this form of flow should be included in the minimum flow analysis, along with the substantial out-fall flows generated by Caltrans sources and the San Jose Airport pumping.

LUCAS-21

The gravels of the Guadalupe River between the Blossom Hill drop structure and #280 are highly permeable, so how much base flow is needed in this reach to make the Guadalupe Creek mitigation site accessible to incoming salmon? What months of the year will the Santa Clara Valley Water District guarantee this base flow for fish?

LUCAS-22

LUCAS-23

Lastly, in regards base flow, does the appropriation of Bay Delta water for the development of Santa Clara Valley, carry any responsibility for the fisheries of San Francisco Bay and their general wellbeing? The South Bay is considered an incubator or nursery, so Guadalupe River flows and its fishery are an Estuary resource and essential link in the extended food chain, and the Pacific Flyway.

LUCAS-24

However, if supplemental flows are ever considered, it is imperative that natural conditions be adhered to in seasonal timing, water temperature and quality, and in low enough flows to simulate wet and dry year cycles. In 4.6.3 Hydrologic and Hydraulic Conditions, the Guadalupe River is called a "flashy" system but the rate of flows referenced are not true to the data. 'Flows during winter and early spring are usually less than 100 cfs (Appendix 1C). Flows during May through October are usually less than 5 cfs.' Appendix 1C I cannot find in Vols. 1, 2 or 3. Flows during May through October are usually zero in the natural system, and any and all extraneous flows need to be assessed as to source, temperature and water quality. If this is not in this EIR it is deficient, and I cannot find it to date.

LUCAS-25

The range of winter flows I would like^k review in a subsequent 'bulk mail' and do request a continuance in this matter. The variability of such flows is unique to the region and its mountain ranges and results in the defining characteristics of the steelhead and salmon that use these rivers. This end of the spectrum of 'base flow' should not be tampered with unduly either if the integrity of the system is to be retained. Table 4.1-2 is the only data I recognize.

LUCAS-26

LUCAS-27

If any mitigation is considered in this area I do request full public review. The most damaging actions in these watersheds have been done under guise of mitigation.

LUCAS-28

In regards the thermal implications of this project, I request a continuance, for submittal of my data as well, as I am not comfortable with the Figure 1C-1,2,3,4,5 graphs. It is the test for survival of this run of salmon in the South Bay if the water temperatures of the Guadalupe River can be held below critical levels before, during and post construction. A 6.5°F increase in the upstream portion of Segment 3B is a cumulative effect that means the demise of this coldwater fishery habitat to my layman's understanding, and a demise of this run of salmon and steelhead. The loss of riparian cover in this area has been avoidable and it is unacceptable to accept this condition at this time as a given. (Table 6.4-1).

LUCAS-29

LUCAS-30

When this project was first authorized by Congress and California Department of Fish & Game had rediscovered the extent of the salmon run of the Guadalupe River, there was no planned disturbance to riparian habitat in the main channel from Balbach to San Fernando, due to the bypass. There were 534 trees in that reach, 97 of them ordinance trees, and there were stands of Fremont cottonwoods and Sycamores between Park and San Fernando. If mismanagement of the activities that have been permitted on the river in the intervening years have been avoidable, in light of the approved flood control project design, then there is a culpability that demands compensatory action even if it results in cooling refrigeration coils sunk into the armored river bottom. Please re-evaluate Segment 3B.

LUCAS-31

There are other measures that could be taken upstream, like replanting the trees that were removed at the installation of the fish ladder in the Blossom Hill drop structure, and making all percolation ponds and flashboard dams offstream. The offstream ponds could be shielded from heat of day and afternoon sun by trees on the western shore especially. Guadalupe Creek has very high thermal impacts when it passes through the percolation area upstream of Almaden Expressway but to remove that water supply element entirely should be the very last resort.

LUCAS-32

The downstream of #280 Segment 3C armored river bottom and bank is another prime example of the natural river being manhandled. The stand of 150-200 year old oaks that were removed for the Woz Way bridge, the design of the bridge and the intrusion of the river walk into the center of the stream has all resulted in the destabilization and washout of a prime riparian resource. This needs a second Rosgen

LUCAS-33

opinion. The river walk should be recontoured and the eastern bank replaced to at least a portion of its lush riparian foliage. It was this rich canopy that gave shade to a prime riffle and holding pool sequence for the steelhead and salmon, and screened the city parking garage and parking lots from the Children's Discovery Museum. The western bank is eroded and the entire region seems quite destabilized. From cool and serene the bank is now going to be widened to the east and encased in hot rock? This is the opposite of what is needed. Please consider an alternative.

LUCAS-33

Alternative engineering methods in this 'natural' part of the approved Guadalupe River flood control project should not imply diminished hydrologic certainty. The location of the bypass is best served if the original curve of the eastern bank is not altered or extended? The river walk should be pulled out of the mainflow of the center of the river? It regularly loses all plantings in its gabion terraces anyway, and it is dangerous to encourage children down into a swift flow region.

LUCAS-34

LUCAS-35

It is regrettable that when so much is known about good engineering that bridges that are being put in are so harmful to the rivers they intercept. If one observes the railroad bridges that were built in the last century (except for the ones in the project area) they usually pass low and flood flows equally well. One presumes the engineers got cleverer as they moved across the country with western expansion. The Woz Way Bridge should probably not extend over the eastern bank as it does? Can this construction be reviewed?

LUCAS-36

By the same token, the replacement of the Kirk Dam on Los Gatos Creek did not seem to be as cleverly slanted as it had been originally. In my belated packet I will enclose pictures of a wier on the Arno River that is dramatically sloped downstream at the outer curve with a sluice gate on the outside of the curve. Kirk Dam has its gate on the inside and is at right angles to the stream. Can this contribute to or at least not diminish a hydraulic jump? It should be noted that the 1995 flood of the downtown was due to a spike in the Los Gatos Creek flow and some analogy made as to the cause or possible remediation. Placing all percolation facilities off-stream should also be in the discussion of the Los Gatos Creek 1/3 contribution to Guadalupe flood flows, and also its contribution to the base flow.

LUCAS-37

LUCAS-38

The mitigation plantings in the bypass in the Coleman to #880 segments are not in kind, if somewhat in place. They are not on a west bank that provides a mile of refugia for an anadromous coldwater fishery in a stream with gravels that enjoy a bubbling-up of underground flows throughout even the hottest of summers. The soil that has encased the mitigation site is poor and the water regimen not equal to a natural system.

LUCAS-39

Reach A, from #880 to Brokaw is almost nonexistent as #87 needs every square inch on the eastern bank for their own mitigation and the airport frontage road is expanding onto the western bank. This was habitat for the western pond turtle. How much mitigation is anticipated here?

LUCAS-40


Guadalupe Creek is too warm and will be for some time, and with continuous flood projects in process from here to the Bay for the next decade it is not a very promising home for an anadromous salmon or steelhead. I have little confidence in it.

LUCAS-41

Los Gatos Creek appears to me to be the only hope for the coldwater fishery in this watershed and I appeal to you to declare a moratorium on any activity that removes so much as a branch of a tree from the Los Gatos riparian corridor. There was talk of a trail taking out 'poor' trees near Lincoln. Please rescind such plans.

LUCAS-42

This is a poor first draft of all that I would like to say, as interruptions teem. Please try to occasionally let the Guadalupe River teem again with salmon.

Sincerely,  Libby Lucas, 174 Yerba Santa Ave., Los Altos, CA 94022